ISSN 0712-7774

CEREBUS LATTER DAYS 1

THIS AARDVARK, THIS SHEPHERD

266
MAY

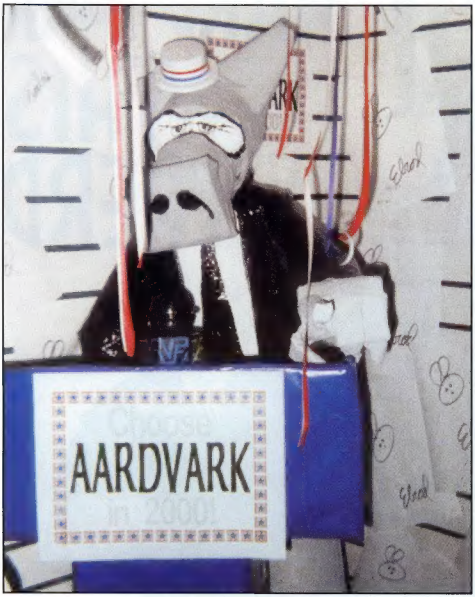
AND THE WINNER IS!

(No Ifs Not Dubya Or Al)

GRAHAM CRACKERS

COMIC • BOOKS

69 EAST MADISON STREET CHICAGO



BEST WINDOW DISPLAY

(CEREBUS CAMPAIGN 2000)

PAT BROWER

MANAGER/DESIGNER

JOIN THE CELEBRATION/SIGNING WITH

DAVE SIM & GERHARD

2 TO 5 P.M.

JULY 11, 2001

(DIMPLED CHADS OPTIONAL)

CEREBUS

NO.266 MAY 2001

DAVE SIM
Creator, Writer, Characters/ pencil & ink, mechanical tones, lettering and cover

GERHARD
Background Artist/pencil & ink

WAYNE COPE
Cover Technician

LATTER DAYS

•

PROLOGUE (Cerebus 266 and 267)

•

BOOK ONE (Cerebus 268 to 288)

•

BOOK TWO (Cerebus 289 to 300)

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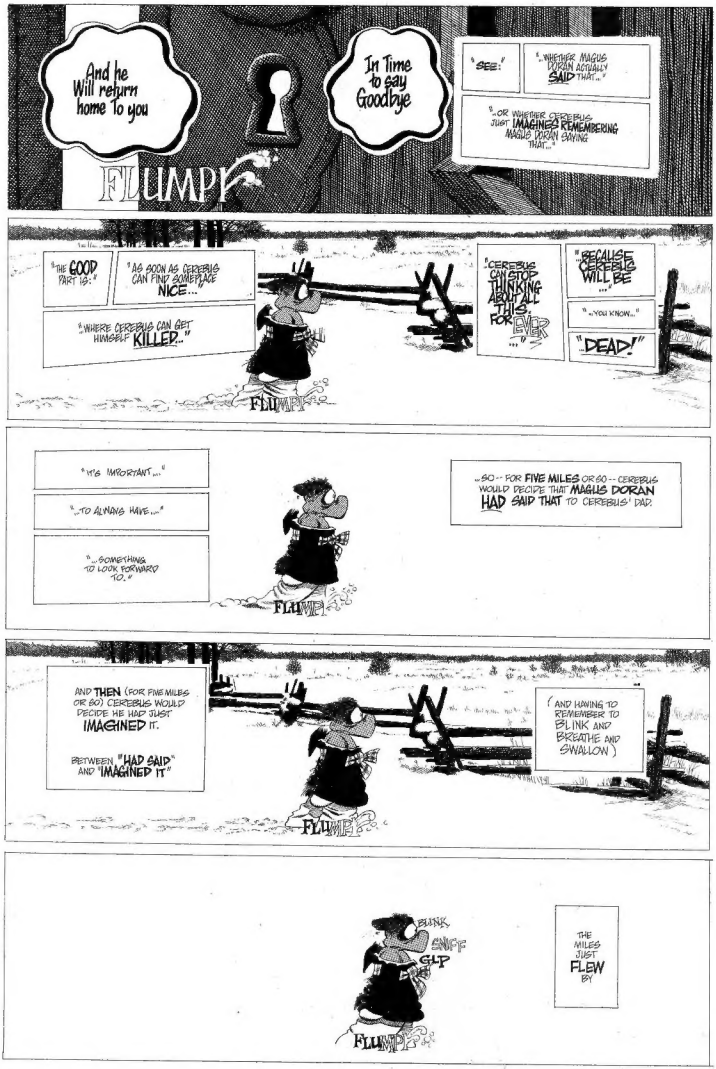
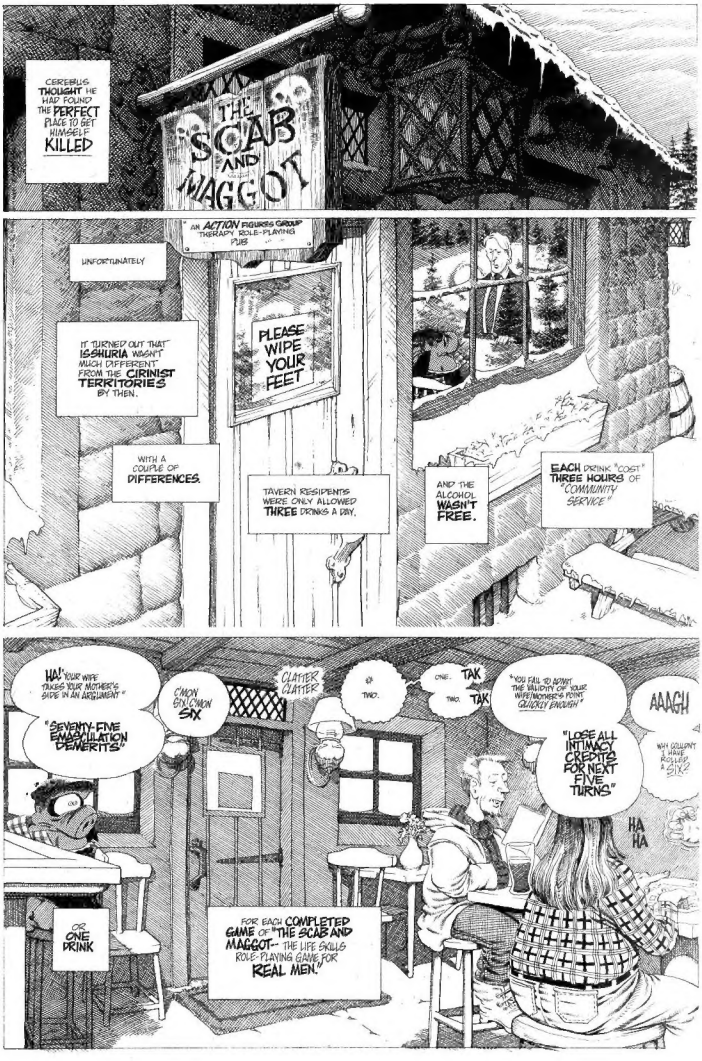
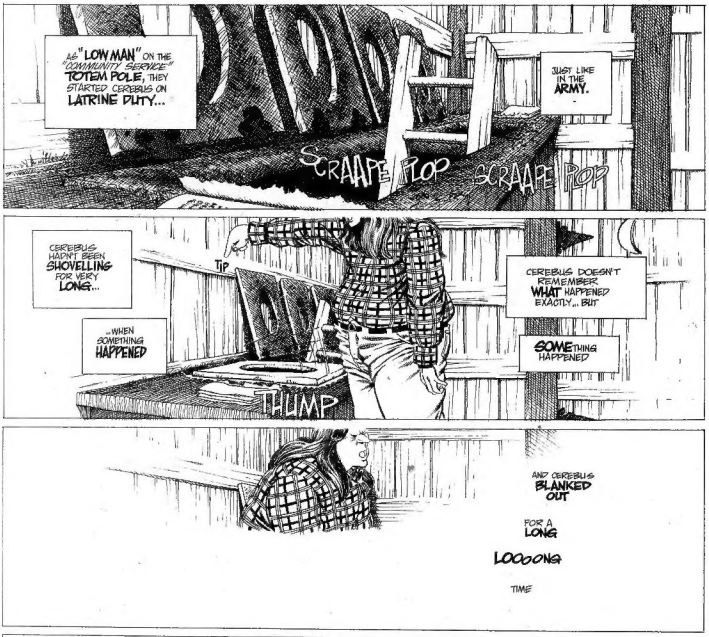
NORTH.
INTO ISSHURIA.
AWAY FROM CEREBUS' SHAME.
AWAY.
FROM SAND HILLS CREEK.
NORTH.
FLUMPF
(THAT'S ALL CEREBUS WAS THINKING)
"GO NORTH."
"INTO ISSHURIA."
"FIND SOMEPLACE NICE ..."
FLUMPF
"...WHERE CEREBUS CAN GET HIMSELF KILLED."
FLUMPF
Yes, carpenter. I give you My Assurances ...
When the end of your life is at hand, Wherever your son is
He will Know
FLUMPF


And he will return home to you
In time to say Goodbye
FLUMP!
"SEE."
"...WHETHER MAGUS DORAN ACTUALLY SAID THAT..."
"...OR WHETHER CEREBUS JUST IMAGINED REMEMBERING MAGUS DORAN SAYING THAT..."
"THE GOOD PART IS:"
"AS SOON AS CEREBUS CAN FIND SOMEPLACE NICE..."
"...WHERE CEREBUS CAN GET HIMSELF KILLER..."
FLUMP!
"CEREBUS CAN STOP THINKING ABOUT ALL THIS FOR EVER..."
"BECAUSE CEREBUS WILL BE..."
"...YOU KNOW..."
"DEAD!"
"IT'S IMPORTANT..."
"...TO ALWAYS HAVE..."
"...SOMETHING TO LOOK FORWARD TO."
FLUMP!
...SO -- FOR FIVE MILES OR SO -- CEREBUS WOULD DECIDE THAT MAGUS DORAN HAD SAID THAT TO CEREBUS' DAD.
AND THEN (FOR FIVE MILES OR SO) CEREBUS WOULD DECIDE HE HAD JUST IMAGINED IT.
BETWEEN "HAD SAID" AND "IMAGINED IT"
(AND HAVING TO REMEMBER TO BLINK AND BREATHE AND SWALLOW)
FLUMP!
BLINK
SNIFF
GLP
FLUMP!
THE MILES JUST FLEW BY


CEREBUS THOUGHT HE HAD FOUND THE PERFECT PLACE TO GET HIMSELF KILLED
THE SCAB AND MAGGOT
AN ACTION FIGURES GROUP THERAPY ROLE-PLAYING PUB
UNFORTUNATELY
IT TURNED OUT THAT ISSHURIA WASN'T MUCH DIFFERENT FROM THE CIRINIST TERRITORIES BY THEN.
WITH A COUPLE OF DIFFERENCES.
PLEASE WIPE YOUR FEET
TAVERN RESIDENTS WERE ONLY ALLOWED THREE DRINKS A DAY.
AND THE ALCOHOL WASN'T FREE.
EACH DRINK "COST" THREE HOURS OF "COMMUNITY SERVICE"
HA! YOUR WIFE TAKES YOUR MOTHER'S SIDE IN AN ARGUMENT"
"SEVENTY-FIVE EMASCULATION DEMERITS"
C'MON GIVE C'MON SIX
OR ONE DRINK
CLATTER, CLATTER
ONE.
TWO.
TAK
TAK
"YOU FAIL TO POINT THE VALIDITY OF YOUR WIFE/MOTHER'S POINT QUICKLY ENOUGH"
"LOSE ALL INTIMACY CREDITS FOR NEXT FIVE TURNS."
AAAGH
WHY COULDN'T I HAVE ROLLED A SIX?
HA HA
FOR EACH COMPLETED GAME OF "THE SCAB AND MAGGOT"-- THE LIFE SKILLS ROLE-PLAYING GAME FOR REAL MEN!

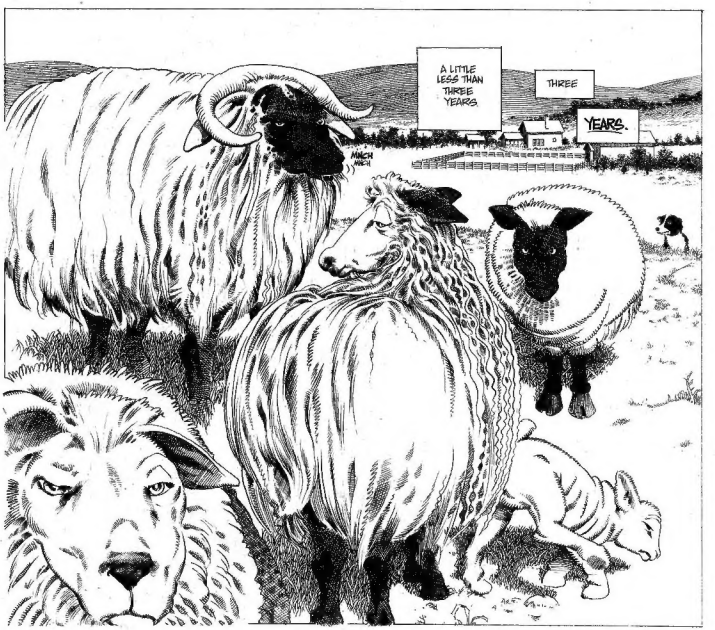

AS "LOW MAN" ON THE "COMMUNITY SERVICE" TOTEM POLE, THEY STARTED CEREBUS ON LATRINE DUTY...
JUST LIKE IN THE ARMY.
SCRAAPE FLOP
SCRAAPE FLOP
CEREBUS HADN'T BEEN SHOVELLING FOR VERY LONG...
...WHEN SOMETHING HAPPENED
TIP
THUMP
CEREBUS DOESN'T REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENED EXACTLY... BUT
SOMETHING HAPPENED
AND CEREBUS BLANKED OUT
FOR A LONG
LOOOONG
TIME

WHEN CEREBUS FINALLY **"IN"** AGAIN ....

...HE TRIED TO FIGURE OUT HOW **LONG** HE HAD BEEN TENDING MR. GURZKY'S SHEEP.

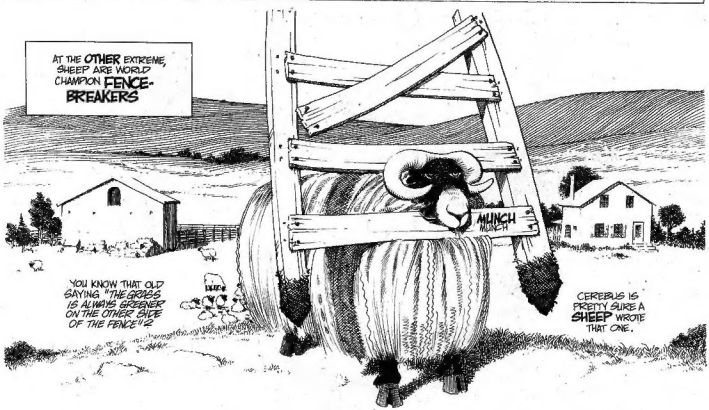
CEREBUS ADDED IT UP **ONE** WAY

THEN ADDED IT UP **ANOTHER** WAY AND IT ALWAYS CAME OUT THE **SAME**:



BASICALLY, A SHEEP IS A WALKING STOMACH...
...THAT TURNS GRASS AND HAY...
MUNCH MUNCH MUNCH
...INTO MEAT AND WOOL

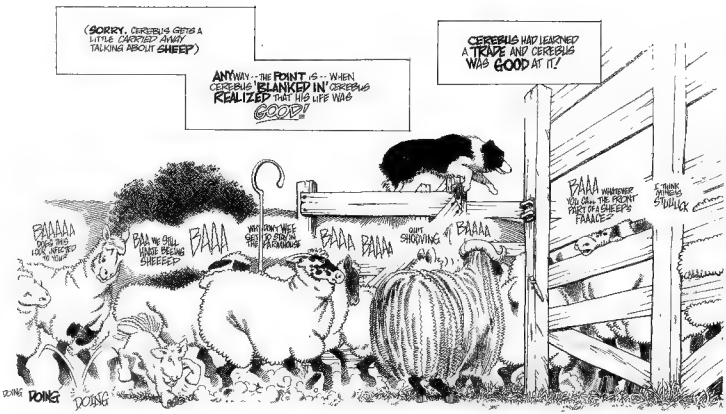
THE SLIGHTEST DISTURBANCE CAN SEND THEM RUNNING IN THE OTHER DIRECTION...
DOING
DOING
DOING
DOING
...AND EVEN IF NOTHING ENDS UP ATTACKING THEM, THEY CAN GET SO SCARED...
DOING!
...THEY CAN JUST COLLAPSE AND DIE ON THE SPOT.
FLOP
ROT

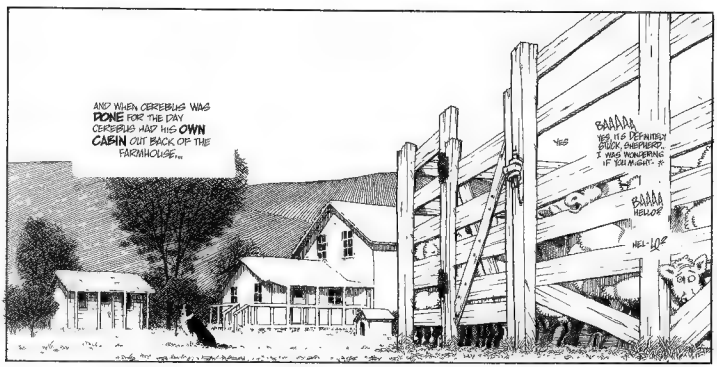

AT THE OTHER EXTREME, SHEEP ARE WORLD CHAMPION FENCE-BREAKERS
MUNCH MUNCH
YOU KNOW THAT OLD SAYING "THE GRASS IS ALWAYS GREENER ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE FENCE"?
CERBERUS IS PRETTY SURE A SHEEP WROTE THAT ONE.

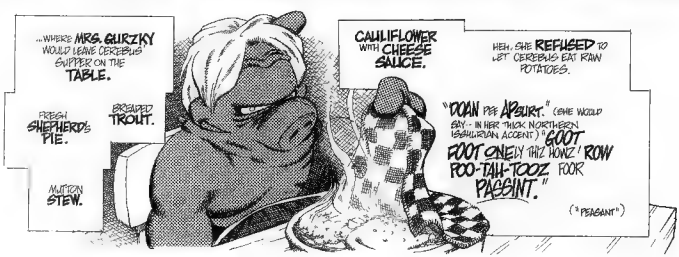
MR. GURZICKY USED TO SAY "A SHEEP'S WORST ENEMY IS ANOTHER SHEEP."
TRUER WORDS WERE NEVER SPOKEN.
IF ONE OF 'EM HAS WORMS, FOOT-AND-MOUTH, LIVER FLUKE, SWAYBACK OR SCRAPIE...
THEY ALL HAVE WORMS, FOOT-AND-MOUTH, LIVER FLUKE, SWAYBACK OR SCRAPIE.
SEE... SHEEP LACK THE WILL TO LIVE.
(YOU JUST HAVE TO LISTEN TO THE NOISE THEY MAKE TO KNOW THAT.)
BAAAA WE DON'T WANT TO LIIVE BAAAA WE HATE BEING SHEEP
BAAAAA LET'S ALL RUB OURSELVES CONSTANTLY FOR NO REEEASON UNTIL WE ALL GET "SCRAAAPTIE" AND DIIIE
BAAAA OKAAAAY!
YOU HAVE TO "DIP" THEM -- ONCE IN THE SUMMER, AND THEN ONCE IN THE WINTER
TO KEEP THE WORMS AND THE PARASITES AWAY
HOLDING EACH SHEEP UNDER FOR A FULL MINUTE.
DON'T WEAR YOUR GOOD CLOTHES
TSH
FSH
SPLSH
END

AT THE SLIGHTEST HINT OF LAMENESS, CATCH THE SHEEP...
...INSPECT THE FEET...
...USE THE KNIFE (WHERE NECESSARY)...
...AND PUT SOME FOOT-ROT MEDICINE ON EACH HOOF.
BAAAA?
CHIP
CHIP
DON'T NEGLECT THE RAMS, EITHER. RAMS HAVE AN INFURIATING HABIT OF WALKING SOUNDLY TEN MONTHS OUT OF THE YEAR -- AND THEN COMING UP LAME...
JUST... WHEN IT'S TIME FOR THEM TO "EARN THEIR KEEP."
DURING "TUPPING" SEASON, EACH EWE WILL COME INTO HEAT EVERY SIXTEEN OR SEVENTEEN DAYS.
A MATURE RAM CAN MATE WITH FIFTY TO SEVENTY EWES.
SOMETIMES A RAM DEVELOPS A PASSION FOR A PARTICULAR EWE, WON'T LEAVE HER SIDE, AND CONTINUALLY REMATES HER.
THUMP BANG
THUMP BANG
THUMP BANG
THUMP BANG

F THAT!!
SKRTCH SKRTCH
IF THAT HAPPENS -- LOCK UP LITTLE MISS 'FAIREST-OF-THEM-ALL' UNTIL SHE GOES OFF HEAT..
AND YOUR RAM WILL GET BACK TO HIS REGULAR 'BUSINESS' IN NO TIME.
BANG
BANG
BANG
BANG
SKTCH


(SORRY. CEREBELUS GETS A LITTLE CARRIED AWAY TALKING ABOUT SHEEP)
ANYWAY -- THE POINT IS -- WHEN CEREBELUS 'BLANKED IN' CEREBELUS REALIZED THAT HIS LIFE WAS GOOD!
CEREBELUS HAD LEARNED A TRADE AND CEREBELUS WAS GOOD AT IT!
BAAAAA SORRY, THIS LOOK AFFECTED TO YOU?
BAA WE STILL HAVE BEING SHEEPED
BAAA
WHY DON'T WEE GET UP AND PLAY FRISBEE
BAAA BAAA
QUIT SHOOVING
BAAAA
BAAA WHEREVER YOU GOT THE FRONT PART OF A SHEEPS FAAACE?
I THINK WHERE'S STULLICK
DOING DONG!
DOING


AND WHEN CEREBELUS WAS DONE FOR THE DAY CEREBELUS HAD HIS OWN CABIN OUT BACK OF THE FARMHOUSE...
BAAAAA YES, IT IS DEFINITELY STULLICK, SHEPHERD. I WAS WONDERING IF YOU MIGHT-
YES
BAAAAA HELLOE
HEL-LO!


...WHERE MRS. GURZKY WOULD LEAVE CEREBELUS SUPPER ON THE TABLE.
FRESH SHEPHERD'S PIE.
BROILED TROUT.
MUTTON STEW.
CAULIFLOWER WITH CHEESE SAUCE.
HEH. SHE REFUSED TO LET CEREBELUS EAT RAW POTATOES.
"DOAN PEE APOURY." (SHE WOULD SAY - IN HER THICK NORTHERN BAVARIAN ACCENT) "GOOT FOOT ONELY THIZ HONZ' ROW POO-TAH-TOOZ FOOR PASSINT."
("PEASANT")

MR. GURZKY WAS A READS COLLECTOR, SO HE WOULD LET CEREBUS BORROW ANYTHING CEREBUS WANTED TO READ. (I.E.- ALL SEVENTY-FIVE "ISSUES" OF MORPHEUS) (WHICH WAS WHAT CEREBUS WAS READING WHEN HE "BLANKED IN" AGAIN!) (SO CEREBUS HAD TO RE-READ A FEW OF 'EM TO REMIND HIMSELF WHAT WAS GOING ON!) (IT WAS REALLY GOOD!) (EVEN THOUGH NOT ENOUGH GUNS FIRED AND THERE WAS TOO MUCH TALKING)
MUNCH CRUNCH MUNCH
SO CEREBUS WOULD READ AN "ISSUE" WITH HIS SUPPER
AND THEN AFTER SUPPER CEREBUS WOULD
OH, RIGHT! AND MR. GURZKY HAD SAWED THE LEGS OFF OF THEIR OLD TABLES AND CHAIRS - SO CEREBUS HAD "CEREBUS-SIZE" FURNITURE FOR ONCE IN HIS LIFE! THAT WAS REALLY GOOD! (WHERE WAS CEREBUS? OH, RIGHT!) AFTER SUPPER, CEREBUS WOULD...
KA KLANK KA KLANK KA KLANK KA KLANK KA KLANK
SPLASH
WASH THE DISHES...
...LEAVE THE CLEAN DISHES ON THE BACK PORCH FOR MRS. GURZKY...
CHECK ON THE SHEEP...
BAAAA
ELROD. YOU DUMB. FUCK.
HOW MANY TIMES DOES CEREBUS HAVE TO TELL YOU!? "KEEP YOUR STUPID HEAD OUT FROM BETWEEN THESE TWO!"
THICK!
BOARDS."
BAAAA
YOU'RE WELCOME

HAVE A GOOD HARD "PULL" ON THE JUG OF CORN LIQUOR THAT MR. GURSKY KEPT BEHIND THE HAY BALES...
GULP
KA-POW
PHOOM
PHOOM
AND THEN CERBERUS WOULD SETTLE INTO BED AND READ A
(PBBT)
?
WHAT?
(CERBERUS FORGOT A PART)
FORGOT A PART? WHAT PART? CERBERUS DIDN'T
(SNEAKING INTO THE BUSHES UP BEHIND THE FARMHOUSE... AFTER THE CORN LIQUOR)
(AND SPANKING THE MONKEY WHILE WATCHING MRS. GURSKY HAVE HER BATH)
CERBERUS DOESN'T REMEMBER IT AT ALL
CERBERUS ONLY SAID THAT
IT'S NOT IMPORTANT
IT'S NOT
(ONCE? A FEW TIMES?)
(A FEW WHO-SO?)
(NOT IMPORTANT?)
I TRY EVERY
I TRY THE WHOLE REST OF THE
SHUT UP!
SORRY.
WHAT WAS CERBERUS SAYING AGAIN?

OH **AYE**... AND THEN CEREBUS WOULD SETTLE INTO BED AND READ ANOTHER ISSUE OF **"THE DREAM MASTER"**... AND THEN TURN OFF THE LIGHT AND CEREBUS WOULD LIE THERE IN THE **DARK**... LISTENING TO MR. AND MRS. GURZKY IN THEIR BEDROOM **QUARRELLING**.... (HA HA)

..."QUARREL-ING" ISN'T REALLY THE **RIGHT WORD** WHAT CEREBUS WOULD LISTEN TO WAS MRS GURZKY LANDING ON MR GURZKY LIKE A TON OF BRICKS THE **MOMENT** HE WALKED IN THE BEDROOM.

"EFF.. I HADT....KNOWN!"

(HEH HEH CEREBUS WON'T TRY TO **"DO"** MRS GURZKY'S ACCENT, WITH THE PLUGS BETWEEN THE WORDS AND EVERYTHING..OR IT'LL TAKE **FOREVER** TO TELL YOU THE STORY!)

"IF I HAD KNOWN WHAT THIS PLACE WOULD BE LIKE I WOULD NEVER (NEFFER!) HAVE COME SOUTH WITH YOU! PEASANT! EVERYONE HERE IS PEASANT! ALL THEY DO IS TALK ABOUT EACH OTHER BEHIND BACK--THEY ALL CROUCH LIKE ANIMALS (AH-NEE-MAL) WATCHING TO SEE WHO IS SLEEP WITH WHOM, WHO IS NOT DO WHAT EVERYONE THINKS EVERYONE SHOULD DO - WHO IS DO WHATEVER EVERYONE THINKS EVERY-ONE SHOULD NOT DO WHEN I, MRS. GURZKY, SIT AT TABLE IN MARKET WITH SWEATERS (GOO-WHY-TARE)...

(MRS GURZKY KNITTED THESE GREAT SWEATERS FROM THE SHEEPS' WOOL - THAT'S WHERE THE GURZKYS MADE MOST OF THEIR MONEY. EVEN THOUGH MRS GURZKY CALLED EVERYONE PEASANT...LOUD ENOUGH SO THEY COULD **HEAR**, SHE COULDN'T KNIT FAST ENOUGH TO KEEP UP WITH THE DEMAND **THAT**'S HOW GREAT HER SWEATERS WERE!)

*...I HAVE TO FIGHT URGE TO RIP OFF ALL MY CLOTHES AND DANCE NAKED JUST TO SEE **STUPID, HORRIFIED (HORE-E-FIGHT)** PEASANT FACES."*

SEE, **GOD** (CEREBUS PROBABLY THOUGHT OF HIM AS **TARIM** AT THIS POINT) **GOD** WAS SHOWING CEREBUS WHAT CEREBUS' LIFE WOULD'VE BEEN LIKE - WITH JAKA - IN **SAND HILLS CREEK**. MR GURZKY NEVER WENT TO TOWN OR ANYWHERE EVER AND WHEN HE DID HE COULDN'T LOOK ANYONE IN THE EYE AND NO ONE WOULD LOOK **HIM** IN THE EYE AND HIS FAMILY HAD HAD THE SAME FARM FOR **HUNDREDS** OF **YEARS!** ALL HE HAD IN THE WORLD WAS MRS GURZKY AND THE FARM AND THAT'S **ALL**. **CEREBUS** WOULD HAVE HAD JUST **JAKA**, AND CEREBUS WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN ABLE TO LOOK ANYONE IN THE **EYE** AGAIN, OKAY, JAKA WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN **RUDE**, BUT SHE WOULD'VE BEEN JUST AS "HOITY-TOITY"--JUST AS "MY SHIT DON'T STINK" MOUTHING OFF AND PULLING HER "PRUNE FACE" AND JUST LIKE MR GURZKY ONLY HAD MRS. GURZKY AND SO ALL'S HE COULD DO WAS JUST LISTEN TO HER *MOUTHING OFF AND MOUTHING OFF AND MOUTHING OFF*, THAT'S ALL CEREBUS COULD'VE DONE WITH JAKA.

SO, THE WEIRD THING WAS, EVEN THOUGH MR. GURZKY HAD MRS GURZKY, CEREBUS DIDN'T ENVY HIM **ONE BIT**. IN FACT IT WAS ONE OF CEREBUS' FAVOURITE THINGS--TO JUST DRIFT OFF TO SLEEP, LISTENING TO MRS. GURZKY MOUTHING OFF TO MR GURZKY KNOWING THAT THERE WASN'T ANYONE IN THE WORLD THAT CEREBUS **HAD** TO LISTEN TO MOUTHING OFF TO CEREBUS.

WELL... NOT **EVERY** NIGHT, ABOUT **THREE** OR **FOUR** NIGHTS OUT OF THE **MONTH** MRS GURZKY WOULD SAY (INSTEAD)

"HOW... STEWPIT... OFF ME."

(STILL JUST AS **LOUD** THOUGH -- SO, EVEN THOUGH CERBERUS WAS OUT BACK IN HIS CABIN, CERBERUS COULD HEAR EVERY **WORD**)

"I HAVE WORN, BY ACCIDENT, MY WOOL PANTIES ALL DAY (**WOOHH, BAAIN-TEE!** OLE **DAY**) AND NOW I HAVE THE **ITCH!** EVERYWHERE, DOWN THERE"

(THIS WAS NO BIG SURPRISE **EITHER** TO MR GURZKY **OR** CERBERUS SINCE MRS GURZKY COULD HAVE BEEN **SCRATCHING HER ASS EVERY FIVE SECONDS ALL DAY!**)

(ALTHOUGH CERBERUS WOULD **PRETEND** NOT TO NOTICE)

"YOU **BAD** HUSBAND!" (SHE WOULD SAY) "WHY YOU NOT **REMIND ME**, I SHOULD NOT WEAR **WOOL PANTIES?** WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO **DO** ABOUT MY **ITCH** (**LICK?**) **LOOK** HOW RED AND SWOLLEN (**BOO-WOLE-IN**) I AM!"

"JOIN THE **CLUB**," CERBERUS WOULD THINK, AND IT WOULD TURN INTO A **LONG, LONG, LONG** "THA BANG" "THA BANG" "THA BANG" "THA BANG" "THA BANG" "THA BANG" **NIGHT.**

BUT CERBERUS **STILL** CAME OUT **AHEAD** ON THE DEAL (THE WAY CERBERUS LOOKED AT IT). **THREE** OR **FOUR** NIGHTS OUT OF THE **MONTH** CERBERUS WOULD'VE **KILLED** TO TRADE PLACES WITH MR GURZKY

...AND **TWENTY-FOUR** OR **TWENTY-FIVE** NIGHTS OUT OF THE **MONTH** CERBERUS WOULD RATHER **ROLL AROUND IN BROKEN GLASS** THAN BE MR GURZKY.

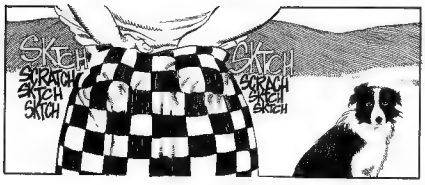
SO **LIFE** WAS **GOOD**.

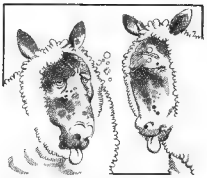
SNIFF?

SNIFF SNIFF

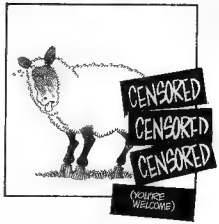
ANYWAY, ONE NIGHT — (THIS NIGHT THAT CERBERUS FINISHED READING "MORPHEUS, MASTER OF DREAMS" AS IT TURNS OUT.) (CERBERUS DOESN'T KNOW IF THAT HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH WHAT HAPPENED, BUT - THERE YOU GO.) A NIGHT AFTER A DAY IN WHICH MRS GURZKY HAD BEEN SCRATCHING HER ASS WITH BOTH HANDS EVERY TWO SECONDS.

(SO CERBERUS WAS PREPARED FOR A LOOOONG NIGHT.)





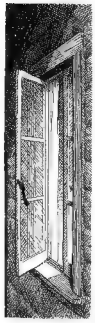
MRS GURZKY DID HER "WOOO-UHH♪ PAWN-TEEZ OLE DAY" NUMBER. ONLY THIS TIME MR. GURZKY SAYS (HE SAYS) "NOT TONIGHT, OKAY? GURZKY IS TOO TIRED." (THE ENDS OF THE FLOCK HAD GONE THROUGH AN ABORTION STORM THAT DAY. WHICH IS ABOUT AS MUCH FUN TO GO THROUGH - FOR A SHEEP FARMER - AS IT SOUNDS.) (ANY YOU CERBERUS WILL SPARE YOU THE DETAILS.) (YOU'RE WELCOME.)



"NOT TONIGHT." THAT WAS A "FIRST"

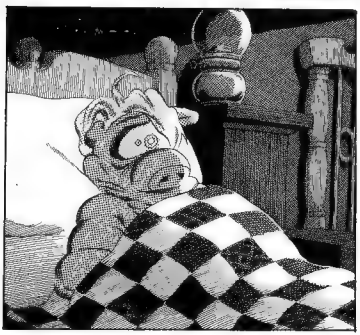
SO CERBERUS THOUGHT. "GREAT!" BECAUSE IT SEEMED TO CERBERUS WE COULD ALL USE SOME SLEEP.

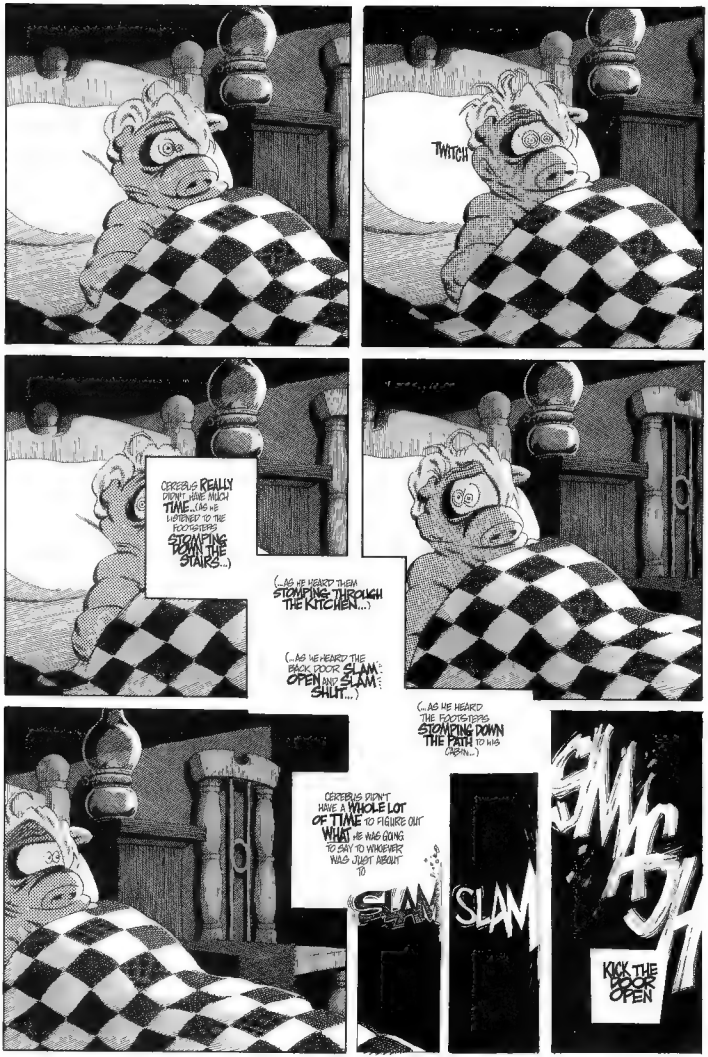
...SO CERBERUS TURNED OVER AND STARTED TO DRIFT OFF. WHEN SUDDENLY HE HEARS:



"IF HE WE ARE NOT MAN ENOUGH TO SCRATCH MY HITCH! MAYBE I WILL GO AND SEE FRED!" (CERBERUS WAS GOING BY THE NAME "FRED" SINCE "CERBERUS" HAD BEEN DEEMED A LAST NAME WHICH - FOR OBVIOUS REASONS CERBERUS DIDN'T FEEL ENTITLED TO USE ANYMORE.)

"MAYBE FRED WOULD LIKE SOMETHING MORE THAN TO JUST WATCH ME IN BATH EVERY NIGHT!"



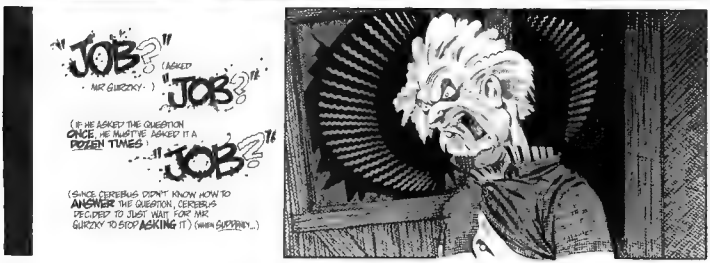

TWITCH
CERBERUS REALLY DIDN'T HAVE MUCH TIME...(AS WE LISTENED TO THE FOOTSTEPS STOMPING DOWN THE STAIRS...)
(...AS WE HEARD THEM STOMPING THROUGH THE KITCHEN...)
(...AS WE HEARD THE BACK DOOR SLAM OPEN AND SLAM SHUT...)
(...AS WE HEARD THE FOOTSTEPS STOMPING DOWN THE PATH TO HIS CABIN...)
CERBERUS DIDN'T HAVE A WHOLE LOT OF TIME TO FIGURE OUT WHAT HE WAS GOING TO DO WHOEVER WAS JUST ABOUT TO
SLAM
SLAM
SMASH
KICK THE DOOR OPEN

(FORTUNATELY, IT TURNED OUT TO BE MR. GURZKY.)
HE JUST STOOD THERE WITH THE AXE FROM THE WOODPILE HUFFING AND PUFFING AND TWITCHING AND MAKING INSANE WOLF-NOISES DEEP IN HIS THROAT
CERBERUS DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING -- HE JUST WAITED TO SEE WHAT MR. GURZKY WOULD SAY (OR DO)
(CERBERUS HAD ALWAYS SUSPECTED THAT MR. GURZKY HAD KILLED CERBERUS BECAUSE CERBERUS WAS THE ONLY PERSON MR. GURZKY HAD EVER MET WHO WAS SHORTER THAN MR. GURZKY)
(CERBERUS HAD ALSO ALWAYS SUSPECTED THAT MR. GURZKY DIDN'T BELIEVE CERBERUS WHEN CERBERUS TOLD HIM ABOUT ALL OF CERBERUS' WAR EXPERIENCES.)
CERBERUS COULD SEE THAT MR. GURZKY WAS ENJOY TRYING TO MAINTAIN A LEVEL OF MURDEROUS RAGE WHILE TRYING (ALSO) TO FIGURE OUT IF IT WAS A REALLY REALLY GOOD IDEA -- OR A REALLY REALLY BAD IDEA TO SWING THE AXE.
(CERBERUS WAS MORE THAN WILLING -- UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES -- TO LET HIM THINK ABOUT IT ALL NIGHT.) (IF NEED BE)
(SO THAT WAS WHY THE FOOTSTEPS WENT STOMP-STOMP STOMP-STOMP STOMP-STOMP)
(FUNNY THE THINGS YOU NOTICE AT A TIME LIKE THAT)
ANYWAY, MR GURZKY FINALLY SAYS "FIRST YOU STEAL GURZKY'S SHEEP?"
(CERBERUS WASN'T ABOUT TO INTERRUPT HIM BUT THE LOOK ON CERBERUS' FACE MUST'VE SAID: "STEAL YOR SHEEP? FRED DIDN'T STEAL YOUR SHEEP. YOUR SHEEP ARE IN THE SHEEPFOLD WHERE THEY BELONG.")
BECAUSE MR GURZKY THEN SAID:)
"YOU THINK GURZKY IS DEAF? YOU THINK GURZKY DOESN'T HEAR THE SHEEP?"

"ALL DAY THE SHEEP SAY: 'BAAAAA IGNORE GURZKY!" 'BAAAA FRED IS OUR SHEPHERD!'"
'BAAAA WE DO ONLY WHAT FRED TELLS US TO DO!"
(WELL--AS CEREBUS ALREADY TOLD YOU ALL. THE SHEEP EVER SAID WAS "BAAAA WE HATE BEING SHEEP!" (AND) "BAAA--WE WISH WE WERE DEAD!" (AND) "BAAA LETS ALL GET SCRAPIE AND DIE!")
(SO REALLY...
TWITCH
...THAT WAS WHEN CEREBUS FIRST REALIZED THAT MR GURZKY WAS CRAZY.)
SO..
CEREBUS DIDN'T MOVE A MUSCLE OR SAY A WORD-- HE JUST WATCHED MR GURZKY, WAITING TO SEE WHAT (IF ANYTHING) HE WAS GOING TO DO WITH THE AXE.
(FINALLY-- AFTER A FEW MINUTES MR GURZKY REMEMBERED THAT HE HADN'T FINISHED HIS SENTENCE)
"AND NOW" (HE CONTINUED) "NOW GURZKY FINDS YOU HAVE BEEN SPYING ON HIS WIFE?!"

WATCHING HERMER BATH AND AND
(THERE ARE A LOT OF DIFFERENT "CUTE TERMS" FOR IT... "CHOKING THE CHICKEN", "WHACKING THE THROBBER GHERKIN"... BUT CERBERUS WASN'T ABOUT TO PROVIDE ONE WITH MR GURZKY STANDING THERE TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHAT HE WAS GOING TO DO WITH HIS AXE.)

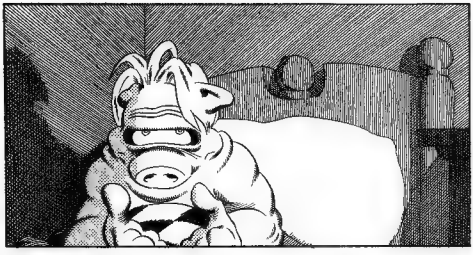
CERBERUS SUDDENLY HAD THIS WEIRD IDEA THAT MAYBE REASON WOULD WORK. SO (AS REASONABLY AS POSSIBLE) CERBERUS SAID
"FRED JUST WANTS TO DO HIS JOB, MR GURZKY..."
(WHAT A MISTAKE THAT WAS)


"JOB?" (ASKED MR GURZKY.)
"JOB?"
(IF HE ASKED THE QUESTION ONCE, HE MUST'VE ASKED IT A DOZEN TIMES.)
"JOB?"
(SINCE CERBERUS DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO ANSWER THE QUESTION, CERBERUS DECIDED TO JUST WAIT FOR MR GURZKY TO STOP ASKING IT.) (WHEN SUDDENLY...)

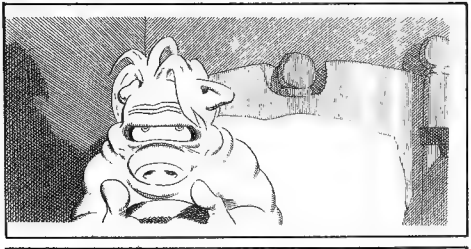
MR GURZKY GAVE OUT WITH THIS
STOMP-STOMP
STOMP STOMPED OFF IN THE DIRECTION OF THE SHEEPFOLD

THE **SECOND-TO-LAST** THING CERBERUS **THOUGHT** (JUST BEFORE HE "**BLANKED OUT**" AGAIN) WAS

"THIS IS **REALLY** GOING TO **DRIVE DOWN** THE WHOLESALE PRICE OF **MUTTON** IN TOWN."



AND THE **LAST** THING CERBERUS THOUGHT (AS HE HEARD THE SHEEP-PEN GATE **SLAM OPEN** AND **SLAM SHUT**) WAS



"**WELL...**"

"THEY **ARE** HIS SHEEP."

AARDVARK COMMENT

Okay!

Remember three years ago when I said that I'd be back sometime after the 1900's? Well, guess what? I wasn't lying. I've got one spanking new letter and then I've got an assortment that I accumulated over the three years. Let's start with the spanking new letter:

Jeff Smith,
CARTOON BOOKS,
Columbus, Ohio

Dear Dave,

First you come into my home and insult my wife and I, then you publish a delusional and fictitious account of the event.

Now, seven years later, you want to square all accounts by climbing into a *boxing ring?*

Get stuffed.

Yours truly,

Jeff

"*My wife and* me," *Jeff.*

If I insulted you and/or Vijaya...

(which I don't *think I* did *unless you and/or Vijaya consider my stating the simple* fact *that "birth" is out-stripping "death" by a very wide margin in our modern world to be an inherently insulting observation) (and it* is *a* fact, *Jeff, as UN population statistics confirm—the earliest the UN anticipates a global balance between the two is fifty* years *from now) (personally, I have my sincere doubts—with all of the latter-day Dr. Frankensteins implanting embryos in 62-year-old women, cloning, freeze-drying embryos, surrogate motherhood, et al) (your vehement reaction to what was a mere* factual *observation on my part was what struck me and what motivated me to include the incident in the part of* Reads *modeled on Truman Capote's "La Cote Basque")*

...then how did you—to quote your Comics Journal *interview—"proceed to enjoy your weekend"? Presumably if you had been as grievously offended at the time as you are now attempting to portray yourself as having been, "enjoying your weekend" would have been—at the very least—extremely difficult in the nearly constant company of the grievous offender (me) over the weekend in question. Right?*

"All accounts*"? All* what *accounts? I took you at your word when—after we discussed what you here describe as my "delusional and fictitious account of the event"—I made my sincere offer on the phone: "Well, Jeff, we could just call our friendship off." And you said, as I recall, "Yes, let's do that. 'Bye." And hung up. Fair enough. (I confess I did not understand why you approached me on a couple of occasions after that. I certainly had nothing further to say to you. I don't* hate *you but I assume when a friendship is called off it's called off. I made the offer and you accepted it. Done deal. No sweat.)*

No, there was only one issue that I was dealing with in "Dear Jeff Smith": your lie *in your* Comics Journal *interview that you threatened to give me a fat lip. What I was saying—and what I am* still *saying—is "put up or shut up." Two choices, Jeff: Either a) "put up" or b) "shut up". Either one is fine with me. Tell me a)* where *we are going to do this b)* when *we are going to do this c) any other requirements you might have or d) shut up.*

Capice?

****

Claude Flowers,
602 N. Prospect Ave.,
Kent, Washington,
98031-4656

Dear Dave:

Thanks to you, I've started reading stuff by F. Scott Fitzgerald. I've already soaked up *This Side of Paradise* and "The Crack-Up" (*Gatsby* I read in school), now I'm three-quarters of the way through the Bruccoli-edited *A Life in Letters.*

A letter to Scottie [*Fitzgerald's daughter*] dated September '35 (pg. 286 in the edition I've got) reminded me of the conversation between "you" and Cerebus at the end of "Mothers & Daughters," in which "you" confront him on his treatment of Jaka.

The parts that struck me:

"I didn't know till 15 that there was anyone in the world except me & it cost me *plenty.*"

And:

"You entered into their lives, humble lives of struggling people, instead of insisting that they enter into yours...you had let them be aware of what you were doing...you never considered or pretended to consider their lives, their world at all—your own activities seemed of so much more overwhelming importance to you! You did not use one bit of your mind, one little spot! To think what they were thinking, or to help them!"

I'm not sure if you saw similarities between "your" commentary & this one, but they're certainly born of the same frustration and concern.

One thing I still wonder about: If Cerebus had asked "you" if you had any advice for him, any suggestions on how he should live the rest of his life on earth, what would you have said? The tavern idea simply inspired a "what a maroon," but if he'd asked for your guidance, what might you have said?

I'm not certain you'd even have an answer for that one, but it's something I've pondered, lo, these many years.

Actually, I do. When it comes to Cerebus as a character I am sort of "omniscient" if you think about it. I am writing his story and I have lived with him as a constant presence for over twenty years so—in attempting to give him an approximation of free will (which is roughly what I was doing in not writing our "dialogue" ahead of time)—I believe I got a vague sense of what God's relationship is to each individual human being:

He Knows Already. Whatever it is.

Just as I already knew Cerebus Only Wanted Jaka God must've Known—at the time that I was doing that part of the story—that I wanted what Cerebus wanted. Not Jaka (sincerely not my type), but "a good one." God is omniscient and omnipotent and omnipresent. No great trick to rustle up what Dave Sim would consider "a good one" in the girlfriend category. If anything He overdid it. She was a collage of everything that I had loved and "loved" in my prior girlfriends (and wife)—and had several characteristics of the ones I never "got" (but sure wanted to). To top it all off, around that time was when Eddie Campbell introduced Collage as Bacchus' "significant other." Do you suppose there's a Deific version of "Nyuk nyuk nyuk"?

Turned out to be a completely analogous situation to what I was doing with Cerebus. "Look, I can give you Jaka, but you are completely unsuited to each other. It won't be apparent for a while but then it will be downright inescapable. It's not something I want to put you through, but your misperceptton of Jaka is in the way of who and what you really are, so (you know) here's mud in your eye! *"*

To Cerebus' credit he only had to go through it once. This was—what?—my fourth or fifth time? "Oh right. This! *This really doesn't work for me very well, at all.* Structurally, *I mean. Nothing against her. If I was suited to this 'couple-y' sort of life, she would be perfect. Why did I think I wanted this?"*

Of course God also Knew that I was going to read the Bible (so I could fake my way through the Book of Rick *in* Rick's Story*) about two-years-and-change into the relationship. And obviously he was about ninety-nine-point-nine percent certain that the Bible and the Koran would be my "thing" in a way no romantic relationship and/or marriage could ever be. I often think that dealing with me must be even more of an absolute cakewalk for God than his dealings with most people since so much of my life is centred in the Cerebus project and, thus, mapped out way, way ahead of time. The iron-clad certainty in 1989 that I would read the Bible from Genesis to John's Apocalypse in 1996-97 made my transformation from Old Dave to New Dave inevitable, a no-brainer. So: (*Finally *tying this into your question) if* I *had asked* God*—at the time I was first discovering Him while still in the midst of my last relationship—"God, what is your best advice about my life?" Well, as an omniscient being he would know that the question would centre—in large part, at the time, in my mind—on my girlfriend. And He could* honestly *have said: "Don't worry too much about the relationship. You end it soon." But, how kind would* that *have been? I would've been* devastated *after working so hard at it for two years. So the only real sense that I had was of God (quite kindly) "telling" me: "Keep going. You're doing...well...not* fine. *Not yet. You've chosen to go through this custard-pie-in-the-face couple-y routine again for some reason. Be aware of the choices that you're making before you make them. Choose what you think is right."*

So, had Cerebus *asked* my *advice, I think the answer would've been comparable. "Keep going. You're doing...well...not* fine. *Not yet. You need a refresher course in this 'Jaka thing.' Be aware of the choices that you're making before you make them. Choose what you think is right."*

I don't think God has to "check his math," if you know what I mean (WHAT! WHAT'S HE DOING NOW?! OH THIS IS TERRIBLE! THIS IS AWFUL! I WAS SURE HE WAS GOING TO TURN OUT BETTER THAN THIS! WHERE'S MY COSMIC CALCULATOR? GABRIEL! MICHAEL! RUN THESE NUMBERS THROUGH AGAIN!). *As with the situation between me and Cerebus, I see God as giving me as much of what I want as He Knows I can handle. God is certainly not stingy with anyone as far as I can see. I try not to be stingy with Cerebus.*

Tying this in with Scott Fitzgerald's letters to his daughter: I suspect your average parent finds out what sort of relationship he/she has with God by the kind of relationship his/her child has with him/her. *At the age of fifteen Scottie would just strip the five- or ten-dollar bill out of the envelope and put the letter to one side after skimming through it. I'd be willing to bet that that was pretty much how God saw His relationship with Scott Fitzgerald.*

"Happy Holidays" for what year? I shudder to think, Claude!

****

E-rok,
(somewhere in Texiania)
eroc 80 @ hotmail.com
(or, less efficiently, ya Luddite:)
PO Box 666
Groves, Texas
77619

Dear Dave,

(Reading your "Notes"...)

Okay, so in #243, your F. Scott simulacrum is "sophisticated," too sophisticated for Jaka, then in 244, he's suddenly "simple-minded," and you go to great lengths to try to prove him to be so. Alright, Dave, so which was he, "sophisticated" or "simple-minded"? Can't make up your mind, eh? I suppose he's "sophisticated" until he attacks your totum-god *[sic]* (or actually has a character—in a book—with that perspective: all the same to you, obviously), and then he's "shallow," right? (I see, now, who's "simple"). You reveal yourself as a fanatic—merely writing as a doctrinarian propagandist—with stunts like that. If you thought that the speech was simple-minded and callow and shallow and fatuous (or whatever) you could have

just as easily ascribed those qualities to the character (the *fictional* character) speaking. Personally, I thought it was cool (and *clever*, not simple...).

Sorry, I'm behind in my reading (been travelling), so I can't bust yer chops about anything recent. I'll try and catch up. As always, thanks for the artistry and controversy.

My pleasure, I assure you.

We're really into the hall-of-mirrors thing now, aren't we? It depends on whether you are talking about F. Scott Fitzgerald, F. Stop Kennedy, George Jean Nathan, Maury Noble, Jay Anthony Diver the Younger and/or Elder or aspects of Dave Sim. They're all in there in Cerebus 244.

A trait shared by F. Scott Fitzgerald and F. Stop Kennedy was/is a "winning way with women". Both were/are more comfortable in the company of women, more interested in women and more interested in female interests than masculine company and interests. At one level, this can certainly be seen as "simple-minded." Scott Fitzgerald writing "How could I be broke? I was living in the best hotel in New York!" Well, that's simple-minded. You're broke because you spent all your money. At the same time, pick any one of the pithy bon mots that I lifted from Fitzgerald's Notebooks. "Listen, little Aisha: Draw your chair up close to the edge of the precipice and I'll tell you a story." That's pretty sophisticated. So it doesn't seem to me that it is an either/or with F. Scott Fitzgerald. It's both. Therefore it was both with F. Stop Kennedy and it was both with Jay Anthony Diver.

One of the traits I used to notice in myself (and which, I suspect, was a trait in himself that F. Scott Fitzgerald was documenting in the "Symposium" chapter in The Beautiful and Damned) *was the sudden onset of extremely lucid, extremely literary thinking which would accompany a certain stage in inebriation. It would hit me in a club while I was just watching the pretty young girls "doing their thing". Lucid, beautifully structured sentence upon lucid, beautifully structured sentence. "My kingdom for a notebook" (as it were). After I read the Bible, the quality of these "episodes" changed from lucid, eloquent nihilism and jaded, clever, world-weary defeatism to a sharper and more (for want of a better term) "positive" stream of thought. It seems to me implicit in the George Jean Nathan/Maury Noble/Scott Fitzgerald (at his worst) scheme of things that one becomes enamoured of falsehood. A conundrum presents itself and the reaction is "shit happens" or "nothing matters and what if it did?" Which (it seems to me) is just an excuse to stop examining the conundrum because what is implied by the conundrum is either/or. There is a choice between a good choice or a bad choice—the intact or "intact" parts of one's soul clearly favouring the good choice, the degraded or "degraded" parts of one's soul favouring the bad choice or* no *choice. In the latter instance "shit" will, indeed, "happen" if one makes no choice. But it is inescapable that one has, in fact,* chosen *"shit" by default. That is, saying: "shit happens" is (in actuality) saying "By default, I choose shit as my option." It is (I readily admit) a matter of one's perspective. I suspect that your seeing the original Maury Noble/George Jean Nathan/Scott Fitzgerald monologue as "cool (and clever, not simple...)" owes much to your view of reality. From where I sit, "shit happens" seems a simple-minded and instrinsically false perception of reality. From where you sit (I suspect) "shit happens" seems a sophisticated and instrinsically true perception of reality.*

****

Tim Finn,
3803 Bradley Lane
Chevy Chase, Maryland
20815-4254

Dear Dave:

If you die before issue 300, would the comic end prematurely as well? I wonder how much you discuss the story with Gerhard, what's happening now and how it all ends. Would you want him to finish *Cerebus* without you? Does he wish to?

Imagine. People might still buy that Dave Sim comic even though Dave Sim was no longer around.

But, seriously, do you have any contingency plans in case of your premature passing?

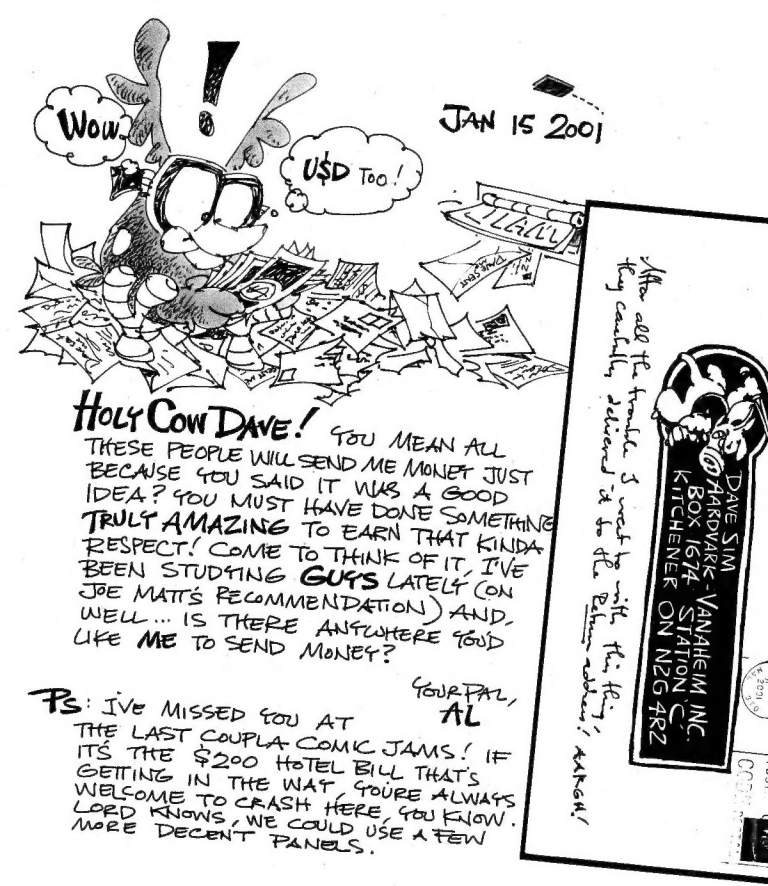
Curiously,
Tim

As it stands, if I die "mid-issue" there is the understanding that everything that I had finished on that issue would be printed and the rest of the pages would be left blank. That is, if I died with my part of page 3 done, then the book would be printed with 17 blank pages (along with whatever was done on "Aardvark Comment" or whatever was going to run in the back of that issue).

At the moment of my death, my sixty-percent ownership of Aardvark-Vanaheim, Inc. passes to Gerhard. So he would have complete control of all of the work to that point, the original artwork, etc. It would be up to him if he wanted to finish the backgrounds up to the aforementioned page 3 or stop doing the backgrounds on whatever page he was working on at that time (as I'm writing this I'm working on issue 267 and Gerhard is working on issue 266).

Gerhard is an illustrator, exclusively. Asking if Ger would finish the book is like asking me if I would finish a musical composition of Gerhard's if he died. I know nothing about music. I wouldn't even know where to begin.

The intellectual property would be his, so he could hire *a writer to finish the book. However. I've been pretty careful not to write anything down in outline form for the (to me) sensible reason that if God only intends for me to get "so far," I* certainly *don't want anything that God specifically did* not *want said lying around in half-finished form.* Reads *or "Tangent" are both good examples. If I've crossed the line with "Tangent" (in God's eyes, not in society's eyes: I couldn't care less what "society" thinks of "Tangent") I'm perfectly willing to get "hit by a bus," as I was at every point in the writing, drawing and serialisation of* Reads.

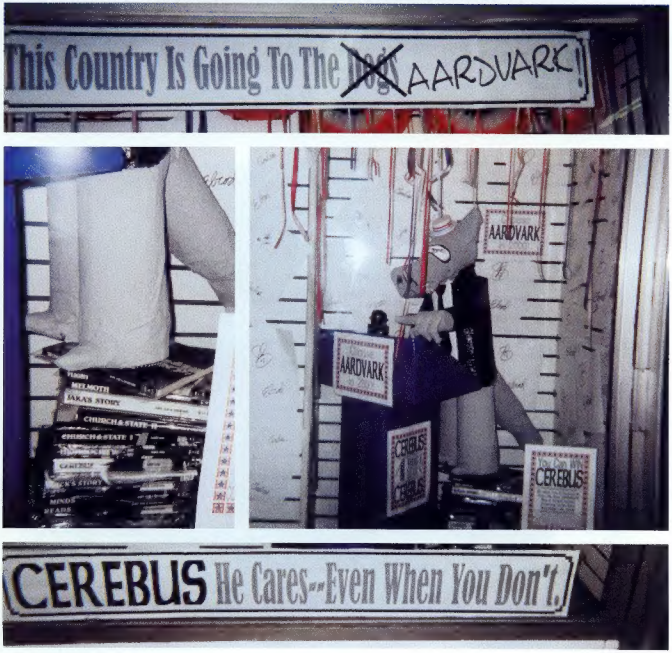

WOW!
U$D TOO!
JAN 15 2001
HOLY COW DAVE!
YOU MEAN ALL THESE PEOPLE WILL SEND ME MONEY JUST BECAUSE YOU SAID IT WAS A GOOD IDEA? YOU MUST HAVE DONE SOMETHING TRULY AMAZING TO EARN THAT KINDA RESPECT! COME TO THINK OF IT, I'VE BEEN STUDYING GUYS LATELY (ON JOE MATT'S RECOMMENDATION) AND, WELL... IS THERE ANYWHERE YOU'D LIKE ME TO SEND MONEY?
YOUR PAL, AL
PS: I'VE MISSED YOU AT THE LAST COUPLA COMIC JAMS! IF IT'S THE $200 HOTEL BILL THAT'S GETTING IN THE WAY, YOU'RE ALWAYS WELCOME TO CRASH HERE, YOU KNOW. LORD KNOWS, WE COULD USE A FEW MORE DECENT PANELS.
After all the trouble I went to with this thing carefully delivered it to the Palmer rubber! ARRGH!
DAVE SIM
@ AARDVARK-VANAHEIM INC.
BOX 1674
KITCHENER STATION C
ON N2G 4R2

As I told Al on the phone—I only wish *that the hotel bill was what was standing in the way. The problem is* time. *Both Ger and I have dropped below the "page a day" pace that's necessary to maintain a monthly schedule. Old age? Too "finicky"? No idea, but there it is. I really miss doing lunch with Chet and Joe and Seth and I miss Comic Jam, but until I can "pick up the pace" it's just out of the question. I'll be drawing (or* drew*— depending on when this comes out) a picture of Cerebus in the front window of the Silver Snail May 4th as part of their 25th Anniversary celebrations (they're going to auction the drawing on eBay to benefit the Toronto Food Bank) but that might be it for me as far as trips to TO go until after* Cerebus *is done.*

Al still has a few copies left of ZZZ (for which he won the 2000 Russ Manning Newcomer of the Year Award at the San Diego Con—see the inside front cover of Cerebus 262) at $4 US or $5 Canadian. *Order from* Al Bunce, 66 Pacific Ave. #1509, Toronto, Ontario, M6P 2P4, CANADA. *And the Toronto Comic Jam takes place in "da back room" at the Cameron House Tavern at the (ahem) less fashionable end of Queen Street West the last Tuesday of every month. Buy Al a brewski and think of me, okay?*

GRAHAM CRACKERS

COMIC • BOOKS



Cerebus stands on his record (actually all thirteen of his phone books—and only his *left* foot! Must be a Democrat. Where is this place again? Chicago? *Must* be a Democrat). "I haven't worked with *papier-mâché* since third grade," says Madison Street manager Pat Brower (one of 8—count 'em—8 great Graham Cracker Comics locations in Chicago's western suburbs) (Jamie Graham, president). Pat wins a Dave Sim & Gerhard signing (July 11, 2001) (hanging chads permitting), 10 pages of original artwork from *Going Home*, dinner for Pat and his staff after the signing, 5 complete sets of the *Cerebus* phone books and an autographed *Cerebus 0 (gold logo)* for each of his *Cerebus* subscribers.

RUNNER-UP!

CASABLANCA COMICS

Portland Maine

RUNNER-UP!

THE LAUGHING OGRE

Columbus Ohio

$2.25USA•$3.50CANADA•£1.50UK